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ABSTRACT

This handbook is designed to help state leaders form vital connections between schools and communities to improve student learning. It explains that community schools are beneficial because they meet students' basic needs, including safety; offer high quality curriculum and teaching aligned with academic standards; provide learning experiences that extend beyond the traditional school day; show students opportunities for success beyond academics; and engage students as active learners and contributors. Community schools make a difference by strengthening students, families, schools, and communities. Steps that state policy leaders can take to support community schools include developing and promoting a vision for improving student learning that incorporates the critical role of families and communities, as well as schools (e.g., articulating and promoting a vision of community schools that supports young people's learning and healthy development while strengthening families and communities); ensuring that all state programs and policies focus on supporting student learning (e.g., providing incentives for coordination at the local level); and making targeted investments in community schools to increase the effectiveness of existing programs and resources (e.g., supporting community school coordinator positions). (Contains 21 references.) (SM)

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A Handbook for State Policy Leaders

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Improving Student Learning/Strengthening Schools, Families, and Communities

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Coalition for Community Schools

The Coalition is an alliance of more than 170 organizations in education, family support, youth development, health and human services, community development, and government, as well as local and state networks of community schools. (See inside back cover for a list of partners.)

The mission of the Coalition is to mobilize the assets of schools, families, and communities to create a united movement for community schools. Community schools strengthen schools, families, and communities so that together they are better able to improve student learning.

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A Handbook for State Policy Leaders

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Improving Student Learning/Strengthening Schools, Families, and Communities

"We [educators] tend to put considerations of family and community off limits in education reform policy discussions. However, we do so at our peril."

PAUL E. BARTON
Senior Associate,
Educational Testing Service

Coalition for Community Schools

Ordering Information:
An executive summary of this report is also available. Single copies of this report and the executive summary can be obtained free of charge by writing the Institute for Educational Leadership at 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC, 20036; sending an e-mail message to *ccs@iel.org;* calling (202) 822-8405; or visiting *www.communityschools.org.*

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Second grade class field trip to the Colorado state capitol (PhotoDisc).

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This handbook is designed to help state leaders—Governors and their policy advisers; State legislators and their staffs; State Boards of Education; Chief State School Officers and staff in State Education Agencies; and directors and staff in state agencies that serve children, youth, and families—to form vital connections between schools and communities to improve student learning. It also will be useful to the work of policy leaders in cities, counties, local school districts, and philanthropy.

Acknowledgements

Many partners in the Coalition for Community Schools have contributed to the development of this document. We especially appreciate the work of Policy Co-Chairs Amanda Broun, Senior Vice-President, Public Education Network and Irv Katz, President, National Collaboration for Youth. The following individuals from among Coalition partners participated in meetings about this paper and offered comments on various drafts:

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Finally, the Coalition wishes to thank our steering committee, many partners, and the dedicated individuals who are working to make the community schools vision a reality for students, families, and communities across the country. Together, we can indeed improve student learning and success in life, strengthen families, and create healthier communities.

IRA HARKAVY, Chair
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Vice-President and Director
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Coalition for Community Schools
Institute for Educational Leadership

Note on this Policy Statement

Partners in the Coalition for Community Schools are committed to the Coalition's vision of community schools. This policy statement represents a general consensus among these organizations. It is not necessarily a formal position of any individual partner.

The Coalition for Community Schools appreciates support for its work from the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds, Charles S. Mott Foundation, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation.

Executive Summary

As states strive to meet increased expectations for student achievement, there is a growing understanding that learning takes place in many places—after school, at home, and in neighborhoods and communities as well as during the school day. Research also recognizes that children need support from their families and their communities to reach their full potential. The Coalition for Community Schools believes that children will learn best in a school that:

- Meets their basic needs, including their safety
- Offers high quality curriculum and teaching aligned with academic standards, during the school day
- Provides learning experiences that extend learning beyond the formal school day
- Shows them opportunities for success beyond academics
- Engages them as active learners and contributors in their communities.

Our public schools should not assume sole, or even primary, responsibility for creating this environment for learning. Schools can, however, form *intentional partnerships* with families and with a wide range of different community organizations and institutions for this purpose. Together, they can create community schools.

Community Schools are Making a Difference

Research shows that community schools are making a considerable difference in cities and towns in almost every state. Here are some of the ways that community schools are strengthening students, families, schools, and communities.

- **Strengthening Students.** Community schools improve student learning; engage students in real world learning; and involve students as resources to serve their communities as they learn.
- **Strengthening Families.** Community schools involve families in their children's education, and help families address issues that are barriers to learning.

"The notion that students... should be held to high standards is simple and compelling. But...every aspect of a needy student's life needs reinforcement in order for him or her to concentrate on the work of the classroom."

Gene Maeroff
Altered Destinies

- **Strengthening Schools.** Community schools marshal community assets to improve students' learning; help teachers focus on teaching; and allow principals to keep schools moving toward high standards for all.
- **Strengthening Communities.** Community schools help make public programs more effective and efficient and leverage private resources. They are accountable to community members. Community schools bring communities together.
- **Community Schools have Public Support.** According to the Ohio's Education Matters Poll, 84 percent of Ohioans support community use of schools for activities such as recreation programs and parenting and adult education classes; 79 percent agree that schools should offer mental health services for students; and 65 percent agree that social services for children—like health services, dental services and after-school programs—should be located in local schools (KnowledgeWorks Foundation).
- **And Community Schools make good sense!**

What State Policy Leaders Can Do

The Coalition for Community Schools calls on state policy leaders to take action to support community schools. States can provide necessary leadership in three areas:

- **Develop and promote a VISION for improving student learning that incorporates the critical role of families and communities, as well as schools.**
  1. ***Articulate and promote the vision of community schools.*** The vision should focus on supporting young people's learning and development, while strengthening families and communities.
  2. ***Create a framework of results.*** This framework can focus local action and increase accountability.
- **Ensure that all state programs and policies FOCUS on supporting student learning.**

SNAPSHOT OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Community schools are public schools that are open to students, families, and community members before, during, and after school throughout the year. They have high standards and expectations for students, qualified teachers, and rigorous curriculum. The staff knows that students and their families need more to succeed, so community schools do more.

Before- and after-school programs build on classroom experiences and help students expand their horizons, contribute to their communities, and have fun. Family support centers help with parent involvement, child rearing, employment, housing, and other services. Medical, dental, and mental health services are readily available. Parents and community residents participate in adult education and job training programs, and use the school as a place for community problem solving.

Community schools use the community as a resource to engage students in learning and service, and to help them become problem-solvers in their communities. Volunteers come to community schools to support young people's academic, interpersonal, and career success.

Individual schools and the school system work in partnership with community agencies to operate these unique institutions. Families, students, principals, teachers, and neighborhood residents decide together how to support student learning.

3. ***Coordinate categorical grant programs across agencies to improve student learning.*** To reduce fragmentation, states can create strategies for planning and evaluation across categorical programs.
4. ***Provide incentives for coordination at the local level.*** Local school improvement plans and plans for programs and services to be provided at schools can include provisions for coordination and integration.
5. ***Connect existing task forces and advisory groups.*** The goal is to reduce fragmentation among agencies and programs.
6. ***Rethink State Education Agency (SEA) and related organizational arrangements to promote coordination.*** Place similar programs in the same unit, with a mandate to align their activities to support student learning.
7. ***Coordinate technical assistance resources.*** Expand available technical assistance resources by developing public/private partnerships and coordinating TA from a range of state programs.

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Together, through a community school approach, all of our children will become educated people, productive workers, strong family members, and active participants in American democracy.

The Rural School and Community Trust

8. ***Recognize the value of community collaboration and community decision-making.*** Allow existing community collaborative groups to coordinate a community schools initiative if they can demonstrate sufficient capacity.

9. ***Allow each locality to select its lead agency for different state programs.*** When communities are able to select an organization to serve as lead agency for a particular initiative, collaboration is more likely to occur than when the state decides who should be in charge.

- **Make targeted INVESTMENTS in community schools to increase the effectiveness of existing programs and resources.**

10. ***Support community school coordinator positions.*** Community school coordinators engage community resources to improve student achievement and ensure that school staff can remain focused on learning.

11. ***Provide sustained funding.*** Community schools need support for a period of time sufficient to demonstrate their effectiveness.

12. ***Support planning at the school–community level.*** Planning grants for local community school initiatives can engage potential partners and ensure quality programs.

13. ***Build schools as centers of communities.*** When communities invest sizable public resources in school buildings, these facilities should be designed and built to accommodate the community's needs for space and services.

14. ***Provide intensive technical assistance on ways to foster the involvement of families in their children's education.*** Family involvement improves students' school achievement, and agencies and organizations in the community can play a vital role in reaching and engaging parents.

15. ***Provide a source of flexible funding to achieve priority results.*** Flexible funding helps bring community partners to the table to determine what needs to be done to support student learning.

16. ***Strengthen professional development.*** All those involved in community schools need access to professional development. Skills for working in collaboration with community organizations should be included in professional development for principals.

ESSENTIAL OPERATIONAL ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

1. **Clear vision and goals** as well as ways to measure effectiveness
2. A **full-time community school coordinator** to provide leadership for planning, management, and collaboration
3. A source of **flexible funding** to attract new partners and allow the partnership to respond to urgent priorities
4. **Sufficient programs, services, and resources** at the school site to achieve desired results
5. **Effective, research-based, service-delivery strategies** coordinated at the community school
6. **Integration of after-school programs and community-based learning experiences** with the school curriculum
7. **Engaged community leadership** at the school site and at the community or school-district level
8. **Technical assistance and professional development** to support quality services
9. **Adequate and accessible facilities.**

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The Case for Community Schools

Across the country, state policy makers are focused on improving students' academic achievement; developing standards for learning; aligning those standards with curriculum, assessment, and instruction; and holding schools and school districts accountable for results. Governors, State legislators, State Boards of Education, and State Education Agencies are immersed in developing and enacting policies to strengthen student learning. *Standards-based reform* is driving policy making and practice from the governor's desk to the teacher's desk.

As states strive to meet these increased expectations for student achievement, there is a growing understanding that learning takes place in many places—after school, at home, and in neighborhoods and communities as well as during the school day. Research also recognizes that children need support from their families and their communities to reach their full potential. The Coalition for Community Schools believes that children will learn best in a school that:

- Meets their basic needs, including their safety
- Offers high quality curriculum and teaching aligned with academic standards, during the school day
- Provides learning experiences that extend learning beyond the formal school day
- Shows them opportunities for success beyond academics
- Engages them as active learners and contributors in their communities.

Few would suggest that our public schools—typically overworked and underfunded—should assume sole, or even primary, responsibility for creating this learning environment. Schools can, however, form *intentional partnerships* with families and a wide range of different community organizations and institutions for this purpose. Partners provide services and opportunities that support the learning mission of the school, increasing the effectiveness of the learning environment and adding to its vitality.

"The notion that students... should be held to high standards is simple and compelling. But...every aspect of a needy student's life needs reinforcement in order for him or her to concentrate on the work of the classroom."

GENE MAEROFF
Director, Hechinger Institute, Teachers College, Columbia University

Schools that partner with other organizations in this way are called *community schools*. A community school is not another program; rather, it is an approach to strengthening our educational system that gives all children access to the tools they need to succeed and returns schools to their rightful place at the heart of the community.

Today, community schools are making a difference in cities and towns in almost every state. Research has shown that the difference is considerable. Here are some of the ways that community schools are strengthening students, families, schools, and communities.

SNAPSHOT OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Community schools are public schools that are open to students, families, and community members before, during, and after school throughout the year. They have high standards and expectations for students, qualified teachers, and rigorous curriculum. The staff knows that students and their families need more to succeed, so community schools do more.

Before- and after-school programs build on classroom experiences and help students expand their horizons, contribute to their communities, and have fun. Family support centers help with parent involvement, child rearing, employment, housing, and other services. Medical, dental, and mental health services are readily available. Parents and community residents participate in adult education and job training programs, and use the school as a place for community problem solving.

Community schools use the community as a resource to engage students in learning and service, and to help them become problem-solvers in their communities. Volunteers come to community schools to support young people's academic, interpersonal, and career success.

Individual schools and the school system work in partnership with community agencies to operate these unique institutions. Families, students, principals, teachers, and neighborhood residents decide together how to support student learning.

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Strengthening Students

Community schools improve student learning. A review of evaluations across a group of 48 community school programs affirms that they contribute to improved student achievement as well as conditions for learning such as attendance and reduced levels of high-risk behaviors (e.g., drug use and sexual activity). When community schools provide supports for families, family involvement in school programs increases and family functioning improves. In many instances, the quality of life in the community also improves (Dryfoos, 2000).

For example: Evidence from the Polk Brothers Foundation's Full Service Schools Initiative, a partnership between schools and community-based organizations in Chicago, is promising. An evaluation conducted by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago (Whalen, 2001) found:

- Reading scores improved at rates exceeding the citywide average at all three participating schools. Improvement in reading has been among the toughest challenges facing Chicago Public Schools.
- Parents reported an increase in the number of adults in after-school programs who could be trusted to help their child with a serious problem. When families see the school as a friend of the family and a safe haven, they are more likely to support the school in maintaining high expectations for learning and appropriate behavior.
- Teachers reported an increase in the number of adults in after-school programs who know children in the school well as individuals.

Community schools engage students in real world learning. Too many young people are disengaged from learning. Community schools engage students through active research-based learning strategies that use the community as a resource for learning such as environmental education, school-to-work programs, and project-based learning. Research shows that these kinds of curricula improve performance in reading, writing, math, and science and reduce discipline and classroom management problems (Lieberman and Hoody, 1998).

For example: A creative teaching team of math, science, social studies, and language arts teachers from the Huntingdon Area Middle School in rural Pennsylvania uses the community problem of storm-water runoff from a nearby wetland to develop a flexible interdisciplinary curriculum. Classroom and field instruction range from learning about erosion, water quality monitoring, and community involvement to writing reports, reading water-themed stories, interpreting statistics, constructing charts and graphs and using computer database programs to report their field findings.

"We want to ignite interest in service and develop character. Students need to learn that they can become resources for their community."

CARLOS AZCOITIA
Deputy Chief Academic Officer,
Chicago Public Schools

Community schools involve students as learners and resources to serve their communities. Through service learning, community schools combine community service with classroom instruction. Service learning provides opportunities for young people to engage in community-based activities that integrate and put in context what they learn in the classroom. Evidence suggests that service learning can lead to changes in educational attitudes and school performance (Center for Human Resources, 1999).

For example: At John Marshall Middle School, in Long Beach, California, students improved their understanding and appreciation of cultural differences through service learning. As "Diversity Ambassadors," students trained in peer mediation, cultural diversity, tolerance, and conflict resolution conducted workshops on issues of racial and ethnic barriers for fellow students and hosted an assembly on school violence in partnership with the Long Beach Police Department's Gang Unit. The program grew from an ad hoc problem-solving approach to a mechanism for linking classroom curriculum with service. Marshall teachers and students credit the Diversity Ambassadors with improving the school climate (Learning In Deed, 2001).

Strengthening Families

Community schools involve families in their children's education. Community schools work with families so that young people can develop to their fullest potential. They also engage families in planning, organizing, operating, and monitoring community schools—increasing the likelihood that families are closely connected to the school.

> ***"For the next decade education should be acknowledged as the top regional priority, [by]...all of our other public systems serving children and their immediate families—county, municipal, and non-profit."***
>
> *JOHN A. BEGALA*
> *Executive Director,*
> *Cleveland Federation for*
> *Community Planning*

For example: The Schools of the 21st Century (21C) community schools model emphasizes early childhood and family support services. Parents who received services from schools using this model reported that they were able to improve their child development practices, were less stressed, spent less money on child care, and missed fewer days of work. Principals in 21C schools reported increased parental involvement and less vandalism. Families also gave 21C schools high marks for academic focus, caring, and collaborative decision-making (Dryfoos, 2000).

Community schools help families address issues that are barriers to learning. Community schools often organize family support centers or offer crisis intervention assistance and related health and mental health services that enable families to address challenges in their daily lives that can have a direct impact on students' readiness to learn.

For example: In a study of 138 grantees in California's Healthy Start initiative, a school-community partnership strategy, families reported improvement in filling basic needs including housing, food and clothing, transportation, finances, and employment (California Department of Education, 2000).

"Communities need to attack this culture of distrust and bring schools to the table. The challenge for schools is to think about what happens outside the classroom and consider resources for teaching and learning in the community. The challenge for communities is to think about ways they can support what happens in the classroom in nonschool hours."

MILBREY W. MCLAUGHLIN
David Jacks Professor of Education, Stanford University

"Governments...need to work more closely, to build partnerships with teachers and parents so that all three groups contribute to the work of more effective quality schooling for all children."

MARY HATWOOD FUTRELL
Dean, Graduate School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University; former President, National Education Association

Community schools marshal community assets to improve students' learning. Using the community as a resource, community schools leverage public investment in schools by engaging the natural supports—people and institutions—in every community.

For example: At the Washington Community School in Indianapolis, public agencies including the health, mental health, parks and recreation, and law enforcement agencies are working together with the school and more than 34 nonprofit organizations (e.g. community centers, Indiana-Purdue University, Big Sisters, neighborhood groups, Westside Community Ministries) and nearby businesses in a strategic partnership to improve student learning. Their efforts have helped the school increase the number of students who meet state standards in language arts and math.

Community schools help teachers focus on teaching. Teachers in community schools teach. They are not expected to be social workers, mental health counselors, or police officers. Partner organizations do this work, providing teachers with essential support, helping them recognize and respond effectively to student problems, and connecting students and their families with needed community services and opportunities.

For example: In Washington State, an evaluation of the Readiness to Learn Initiative found that 84 percent of school respondents reported that the school environment was more supportive of learning due to integrated education, health, and social service systems (RMC Research Corporation, 2001). In a 2000–2001 survey, 78 percent of school personnel involved with the work of the Dallas Youth and Family Centers indicated that the school behavior of students served by the centers improved (Hall, 2001).

Community schools enable principals to keep schools moving toward high standards for all. In a community school, a full-time coordinator mobilizes and manages community assets and resources, integrating them into the life of the school. Working on the leadership team of the school, this individual supports the principal and reduces the burden on the principal of being the sole person responsible for managing community relationships.

"There is no room for compromise in setting high expectations, rigorous standards, and powerful learning for all students, however, HOW we get there can and should be flexible."

LIBIA GIL
Superintendent,
Chula Vista Elementary School District

For example: The Lane Middle School, a Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN Schools) site in Portland, Oregon, benefits from the expertise and outreach efforts of a full-time site coordinator employed by the nonprofit Metropolitan Family Services Agency. The coordinator mobilizes family, community, and business resources to provide daytime academic and emotional support for students. These extra supports have contributed to declining suspension and expulsion rates. The decrease in incidents requiring administrative disciplinary actions gives the principal more time to focus on nurturing a positive climate for instruction and learning (Oregon Sun Schools Initiative).

"As a school leader, I apply the principles of community building. I hope...other superintendents [will] do the same. Together with the community, schools can increase achievement for all children."

LARRY LEVERETT
Superintendent,
Plainfield, New Jersey

Community schools help make public programs more effective and efficient and leverage private resources. Community schools reduce fragmentation of public programs, bringing together programs at school sites and making them accessible to community residents. They help public programs reflect local preferences by leveraging private and voluntary community supports and opportunities. This creates a greater likelihood that the effort will be sustained.

For example: At East Elementary School in rural North Carolina, the Communities in Schools coordinator sought help from the County Health Department to open a satellite health clinic near the school. Now students can receive treatment for conditions that need immediate attention, such as head lice, and return to school the following day. Because the clinic also provides immunizations, more students are fully immunized—and they can be admitted to classes as soon as school begins in the fall.

Community schools are accountable to community members. Partners in a community school define the results they expect to achieve together. They report their progress to the public to ensure accountability.

For example: The Blenheim School, a Caring Communities site in Missouri, initiated a system to refer disruptive students for mental health services. The school reported to its community that incidents of disruptive behavior had decreased by 40 percent (Dryfoos, 2000).

Community schools bring communities together. Families, residents, students, educators, and community members review the strengths and needs of their community and decide how best to support young people and their families. Together, they decide what is important for children in the community. They are not constrained by a prescribed community school "model," but they are informed about what works. Through this process, they build networks and

relationships that help solve community problems and widen ownership of the problem and the outcomes.

For example: In Kansas City, Missouri, the Local Investment Commission (LINC) operates after-school programs in the Kansas City Public Schools with the aim of developing school neighborhood advisory councils and a comprehensive community schools approach. As LINC conducts outreach and community organizing, families become involved—and build important relationships in the community.

> ***"Reframe urban school reform as a civic project. Incorporate an array of city, neighborhood, and community-provided social, medical, library, cultural, and recreational services in and out of school that are rooted in principles of youth development and that seek broader goals for youth beyond raising test scores."***
>
> *LARRY CUBAN*
> *Professor of Education,*
> *Stanford University*

Community schools have public support. A recent poll by the Knowledge Works Foundation in Ohio provides evidence that the public sees schools as the center of communities, offering more than teaching children their ABCs. Nearly 9 of 10 respondents agreed that everyone in the community should be more involved with their local public schools; 84 percent supported community use of facilities during afternoon, evening, and weekend hours for activities like health clinics, recreation activities, and parenting and adult education classes. Seventy-two percent agreed that adult fitness, community activities, and parenting classes should be located and provided within local public schools. Seventy-nine percent agreed that schools should offer mental health services for students, and 65 percent agreed that community social services for children—like health services, dental services, and after-school programs—should be located and provided within local public schools (KnowledgeWorks Foundation, 2001).

Community schools just make good sense. Bringing schools together with the rich assets of organizations and individuals in our communities in order to improve student learning is a common sense policy approach that people understand. Community schools help ensure that schools are not expected to work alone to improve student learning. Instead they have support from families and community in the education enterprise so vital to American society.

Thomas Gardner Extended Services School

Boston, Massachusetts

Boston's Thomas Gardner Extended Services School (GESS) counts as many as 36 different languages among its 500 students, and more than half of these students are learning English as a second language (ESL). Yet recent fourth-grade student performance on Massachusetts' State Language Arts Test catapulted GESS into the ten most improved schools in the state.

The school's progress is tied closely to the efforts of an entire community, working in the school before, during, and after school hours. A close partnership among Gardner; Boston College (BC); the local YMCA, which serves as fiscal agent; and the Healthy Boston Coalition developed into GESS. BC faculty and graduate and undergraduate students work at the school daily. Before-school breakfast and after-school tutorial programs are staffed by certified teachers, with BC students working as mentors and tutors with individual GESS students.

To make sure school-day and after-school learning are connected, after-school teachers regularly visit the day program. The Parents' Center hosts coffees and workshops on topics such as immigration (staffed by BC law students), ESL, and parenting skills. Classes, counseling, a full-time nurse, and "Power Lunches" with members of the business community are offered by GESS and its partners to keep the doors of opportunity open for students and families.

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O'Farrell Community School for Advanced Academic Studies

San Diego, California

More than a decade ago, a group of teachers and families in Southeast San Diego came together to develop a new kind of public middle school, based on a clear philosophy: All children can learn at advanced levels, given a supportive and intellectually rich environment. Teachers would assume responsibility for children's learning, make major decisions with a CEO rather than a principal, and share in the school's administrative work. Convinced that children need to be emotionally and physically healthy to do their best, the school staff decided to dedicate a wing of the building to house community partners who could help meet their students' physical, social, and emotional needs.

Today, O'Farrell Community School for Advanced Academic Studies serves 1,500 sixth- through eighth-grade students. With support from the county's Health and Human Services Agency, the school's discretionary budget, state Healthy Start funding, and other sources, the Family Support Service (FSS) Wing is up and running 12 hours a day. Family advocates see over 500 children and families a year and have been able to document—through fewer absences, fewer detentions, and other indicators—measurable improvement in family stability and student outcomes. While enrichment, recreation, and support services are important components at O'Farrell Community School, the FSS Wing stresses that academics come first.

Families and community members are involved closely in the school and in their own learning. A Head Start program run by a neighborhood organization conducts parenting classes on site—in Spanish and English. An employment preparation program includes classes in budgeting, resume writing, and interviewing. A thrift store on campus offers career clothing, as well as a large selection of family apparel, food, furniture, and appliances.

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University City High School

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

University City High School (UCHS) is just one of 13 West Philadelphia schools where the West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC) approach is making a difference. Drawing on the resources of universities and surrounding communities, WEPIC partnerships develop learning experiences that connect academic exploration, community service, and community revitalization. In one learning experience, University of Pennsylvania and high school students teamed up with former residents of a neighborhood displaced by urban renewal in the 1950s and 1960s, known as Black Bottom. Working together, participants explored interviewing techniques, personal recollections, and the performing arts as a means to study history. The project culminated in a series of "Black Bottom Sketches," written and performed by students and community members.

Themes and activities developed at local elementary and middle schools have been extended and adapted for high school students. Younger students learn about nutrition, analyze their own eating patterns, and create a student-run fruit bar. At the high school level, students learn about alternative production techniques and managing a business. WEPIC at UCHS is focused particularly on strengthening students' school-to-work opportunities.

WEPIC, the University of Pennsylvania, and other community partners have developed a wide variety of paid internships and work experiences. UCHS is also home to the university's newly created Skills Development Center, which helps students, as well as underemployed and unemployed adults, prepare for high-skill careers. In one initiative, students are certified in fiber optic and copper cabling, provided internships with local companies, and prepared to take local union apprentice exams.

Flambeau School

Tony, Wisconsin

Flambeau School has been a community center for rural Rusk County and the surrounding area for more than 50 years. During the regular school day, the school serves 670 students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. On evenings and weekends, classes and activities are offered to students and adults of all ages. The geographical location of the school—it is the only public building in a six-mile radius—is a key factor in its role as a focal point for lifelong learning and community activities. Programs and services are systematized and formally connected as a Community Education program, with funding from the school district.

Community members have long taken ownership of education and schooling issues. As part of a planning effort facilitated by the Institute for Responsive Education, residents learned that the district's main priority was helping students develop competencies in "the basics," defined by this community as technology, school-to-work, social, and life skills.

Flambeau students in grades 5–8 are developing social and academic skills through the Youth Connections Program (YCP), funded through a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant. Flambeau staff and students at nearby Mount Scenario College provide academic tutoring to YCP participants. Every other weekend, YCP organizes events for students and their families. While students are off canoeing or tubing, families can attend parenting classes offered by University of Wisconsin extension personnel.

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What State Policy Leaders Can Do

Supportive state policies are essential to an effective community schools approach. By aligning policies and resources within and across State agencies and ensuring accountability for results, policy makers can build a community schools approach that improves student learning and strengthens families and communities. (See *Essential Operational Elements of a Community School,* page 16.)

The Coalition for Community Schools calls on state policy leaders to take action to support community schools. States can provide necessary leadership in three areas:

- ***Develop and promote a VISION for improving student learning that incorporates the critical role of families and communities, as well as schools.***
- ***Ensure that all state programs and policies FOCUS on supporting student learning.***
- ***Make targeted INVESTMENTS in community schools to increase the effectiveness of existing programs and resources.***

Within each category of leadership action, the Coalition offers specific recommendations for states, with examples from states that are moving in this direction. We also describe recent changes and increased funding in the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which provide states with a significant opportunity to achieve a community schools vision.

ESSENTIAL OPERATIONAL ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Based on the experience of successful community schools, the Coalition has identified nine key operational elements that policymakers should consider:

1. **Clear vision and goals** as well as ways to measure effectiveness
2. A **full-time community school coordinator** to provide leadership for planning, management, and collaboration
3. A source of **flexible funding** to attract new partners and allow the partnership to respond to urgent priorities
4. **Sufficient programs, services, and resources** at the school site to achieve desired results
5. **Effective, research-based, service-delivery strategies** coordinated at the community school
6. **Integration of after-school programs and community-based learning experiences** with the school curriculum
7. **Engaged community leadership** at the school site and at the community or school-district level
8. **Technical assistance and professional development** to support quality services
9. **Adequate and accessible facilities.**

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Vision

Develop and promote a VISION for improving student learning that incorporates the critical role of families and communities, as well as schools. A state-level vision enables policy leaders at all levels to play a role in bringing that vision to reality. State leaders should ensure that the vision is broad enough to engage all communities and promote success for all students. State policymakers—the Governor, state legislators, State Boards of Education, Chief State School Officers, and other agency leaders—should work together to:

1. ***Articulate and promote a vision of community schools that supports young people's learning and healthy development, while strengthening families and communities.***

A shared vision sends a clear signal—to state agencies and communities alike—that student learning is top priority and that all available resources should be mobilized toward this goal. States should:

- Bring together key players across sectors and institutions to develop the vision and a strategy for promoting it to constituencies across the state.

Kentucky: As an integral part of its 1990 landmark education reform legislation, the Kentucky legislature funded Family Resource and Youth Service Centers in every school with sizable numbers of students who qualify for free meals. The program's goal is to help families and children find local solutions to non-academic problems that interfere with student learning. More than ten years after it began, the program remains largely unchanged, and the Kentucky Office of Education Accountability has concluded, "Evidence is mounting that these [centers] are making a difference in academic performance in areas with high proportions of at-risk students."

Source: Southern Regional Education Board

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2. Create a framework of results to focus local action.

States can establish a broad results framework to guide work in community schools and state agency efforts to align policy and resources. Within this framework, localities should be expected to review existing data and set priorities for action, while being held accountable for making progress toward specific results. States should:

- Review existing frameworks that include indicators of success for young people's education and healthy development to create an integrated results framework for the work of community schools.

***Vermont:** The state of Vermont has created a framework of outcomes (or results) for children and families with indicators to measure communities' progress toward attaining those outcomes. This framework is consistent with the community schools approach, as reflected in these outcomes:*

- ***Families, youth, and individuals are engaged in their community's decisions and activities***
- ***Pregnant women and young children thrive***
- ***Children are ready for school***
- ***Children succeed in school***
- ***Children live in stable, supportive families***
- ***Youth choose healthy behaviors***
- ***Youth successfully transition to adulthood***
- ***Elders and people with disabilities live with dignity and independence in settings they prefer***
- ***Families and individuals live in safe and supportive environments.***

Progress toward these outcomes is reported for communities across the state.

Focus

Ensure that all state programs and policies FOCUS on supporting student learning. (See box, page 20.)

3. Coordinate categorical grant programs across agencies to improve student learning.

Categorical grant programs that can be integrated into a community schools vision often operate in separate state agencies including health, welfare, children and families, and juvenile justice, as well as education. Too often these programs are not coordinated to achieve high priority results, especially to support improved student learning. States should:

- Coordinate these programs by defining common planning and evaluation requirements across agencies for all programs operating at or in connection with schools.
- Create joint strategies for utilizing funds across programs to achieve results related to student learning.
- Consider ways in which these program dollars can be used more flexibly to support a community schools strategy, while maintaining clear accountability for results.

***New York:** The state's Council on Children and Families is co-chaired by the Director of Human Services and the Commissioner of Education. As a neutral body, the Council coordinates state health, education, and human services to ensure that all children and families in New York State have the opportunity to reach their potential. Recently, the Council has taken a more locally focused approach, working with several low-performing school districts, providing flexibility and assistance to align all systems to support student learning.*

***New ESEA Provision:** ESEA encourages state alignment in a provision called* Factors Affecting Student Achievement. *It states: "State plans should include an assurance that the State [Education Agency] will coordinate and collaborate, to the extent feasible and necessary as determined by the state, with agencies providing services to children, youth, and families."*

STATE PROGRAMS FOR COORDINATION AT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

When determining how to promote community schools, state policy makers should look at how best to coordinate the variety of existing programs that support children, families, and communities.

- **Adult literacy, adult education and parenting programs** that enhance participants' ability to support their children's education and their own status in the workforce.
- **After-school programs** that extend students' learning day with tutoring and homework assistance and provide additional opportunities for learning and development.
- **Child and family services approaches** that form partnerships between schools and community agencies to support young people and their families.
- **Community education approaches** that promote parent and community involvement in public education, form partnerships to address community needs, and expand lifelong learning opportunities.
- **Family support and family literacy programs** that work in and with schools to strengthen families.
- **Health services,** including school-based health clinics and school-based health prevention and health promotion programs.
- **Mental health programs in schools** that seek to help students overcome barriers to learning.
- **Pregnancy prevention programs** to reduce births to teenagers.
- **Service learning and other approaches** that engage students in their communities and incorporate community experiences into classroom learning.
- **Student support services** efforts that strengthen school-funded services and supplement them with resources from the community.
- **Substance abuse prevention programs** that seek to prevent alcohol and other drug use.
- **Violence prevention programs** that reduce violence, bullying and other disruptions, and teach students and staff to resolve conflict.
- **Youth development approaches** that build young people's assets and talents so they have competencies necessary to succeed in life.

Too often, these programs are disconnected at the local level. When states enable local communities to bring assets from these programs together, communities can integrate these resources to make a difference in the lives of students, families, and communities.

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4. Provide incentives for coordination at the local level.

States require localities to submit plans for programs where funding is allocated by formula, but they seldom require those plans to demonstrate how services and opportunities will be integrated at the school site. State Education Agencies should:

- Require local school improvement plans to indicate how the school will incorporate and integrate related state and federal programs and initiatives.
- Give rigorous consideration to plans for integration in their review of school improvement plans.

Other State agencies should:

- Require plans proposing to provide services at or linked to schools to define how they will cooperate with the school and how their work will contribute to reaching specific results, especially improved student learning.

Minnesota: The state has adopted community education legislation, declaring "the purpose of [community education programs] is to make maximum use of the public schools of Minnesota by the community and to expand utilization by the school of the human resources of the community." The advisory council of each district's community education program must adopt a policy to reduce and eliminate program duplication within the district (Minnesota Statutes, 2000 Edition).

New ESEA Provision: Title I contains new services coordination and integration provisions for both school-wide programs and targeted assistance programs that are significant for the community schools approach. The provisions require that each program shall: "Coordinate and integrate Federal, State, and local services and programs including programs supported under this Act, violence prevention programs, nutrition programs, Head Start, adult education, vocational and technical education, and job training." By aligning state and local coordination efforts and carefully reviewing LEA plans on this issue, states can use these new provisions to promote community schools.

***Kentucky:** Although Family Resource Centers and Youth Services Centers in Kentucky are operated through the state's Cabinet for Children, Youth, and Families, schools must submit plans for these centers as part of a consolidated planning process for schools—to align the center's activities more closely with other school programs designed to improve student performance (Southern Regional Education Board, 2000).*

5. Connect existing task forces and advisory groups.

Most States have multiple task forces and advisory committees devoted to specific programs and initiatives referenced above. Typically these groups work in isolation from one another. This isolation can create turf barriers and conflict among state agencies and at the community and school site levels. State policy makers should:

- Bring together the leadership of existing task forces and advisory committees with a mandate to learn from each other's work and develop integrated strategies to support student learning in local schools.
- Link any new group that may be established to existing structures wherever possible.

***Maryland:** The SEA coordinator of Family/School/Community Involvement works with coordinators in each of the state's 24 school districts to enhance family involvement. Because of a strong commitment to family involvement, the coordinator also works to involve parents in supporting Comprehensive School Health programs as a member of the state's School Health Council.*

6. Rethink State Education Agency (SEA) and related organizational arrangements.

Frequently, programs administered by SEAs that could be integrated into a community schools framework are managed individually, in units separate from other programs with similar goals for similar populations. This arrangement reinforces fragmentation of resources at the state and local levels. Devolution to the states of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, an important resource for community schools, provides an opportunity for SEAs to rethink these organizational arrangements.

In the past decade, many states have created interagency mechanisms to strengthen their capacity to improve results for children and families. If these mechanisms are closely tied to individual agencies' policies and practices, they can become powerful vehicles for focusing state resources on student learning.

- SEAs should create more cohesive organizational structures by providing unified management for initiatives and functions that support student learning.
- State policy leaders should assess the effectiveness of existing interagency mechanisms and refocus their work on improved student learning.

***California:** In 1996, the California Department of Education restructured to create a Child, Youth, and Family Services Branch, which features designated teams providing state-level support for Healthy Start and After School Programs, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Child Development and Nutrition, Family and Community Partnerships, Head Start and State Preschool Collaboration, Comprehensive School Health, Healthy Kids/Safe and Drug Free Schools, and other youth development and family support efforts.*

***Washington:** The mission of the Learning Supports unit in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in the State of Washington is: "Assist school districts in providing quality learning environments, effective partnerships, and coordinated services that support student success."*

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7. Coordinate technical assistance resources.

Many states fund discrete technical assistance (TA) centers focused on implementation of a particular program or initiative. These categorical TA resources are inadequate to support the comprehensive community schools vision. To ensure TA support for community schools, states can:

- *Offer an integrated range of technical assistance services* to schools, from state agencies and grantees or contractors for programs that meet the goals of community schools (e.g., school improvement, youth development, healthy school children, violence prevention, family support, comprehensive services).

- *Form public-private partnerships* with state, regional, and national philanthropic organizations to support technical assistance and professional development for community schools.
- *Support and sustain technical assistance organizations* at the state, county, or city levels, whose purpose is to connect organizations and programs in different sectors, to provide technical assistance and professional development for community schools, and to strengthen the capacity of local community schools planning groups.

ESEA Provision: ***The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program allows states to spend up to 3 percent of their allocation for technical assistance, monitoring, and evaluation. Although the technical assistance funds available under this provision are relatively limited, they can be supplemented by private resources and linked with other related state resources for technical assistance to become a significant support for developing community schools.***

New York: ***Through its interagency Youth Development Project Team, New York State has developed a multi-agency training curriculum for Advancing Youth Development. The training is available to localities through multiple providers, including Cornell University Extension. The state also provides training and support for implementation of the Communities That Care and Search Institute models.***

California: ***The Department of Education, the Secretary of Education, and the Foundation Consortium (a group of California-based funders) have entered into a public/private partnership to co-fund a technical assistance intermediary, the Center for Collaborative Solutions (Center). The Center focuses on training, technical assistance, and mentorship to programs and sites throughout the state, building regional capacity and developing statewide policies related to after-school initiatives. The funding partners see technical assistance as the vehicle for continuous program improvement. Program sites, regional lead TA providers, and the state-wide intermediary are held accountable for achieving clearly defined benchmarks in terms of program quality and effectiveness. The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation is providing support to the Center for organizing Regional Learning Centers in California and assistance to other states in developing public/private partnerships. Additional technical assistance funds from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program will be funneled to this intermediary.***

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8. Recognize the value of community collaboration and community decision-making.

State agencies often require that communities form a new collaborative group to manage each new initiative. In a growing number of communities, established collaborative bodies oversee programming for children, youth, and families. These bodies tap the civic capacity of an entire community. States should:

- Allow existing community collaboratives to serve as the decision-making body for community schools strategies, if they can demonstrate sufficient planning and management capacity.

California: In California, the same local community collaborative is eligible to receive and coordinate resources from multiple state programs, including Healthy Start and the After-School and Neighborhood Partnership Program.

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9. Allow local partners to select a lead agency for each state-managed program.

When a community is able to select the lead agency for a particular initiative, collaboration is more likely to occur than when the State decides who should be in charge. This approach also helps mobilize all community assets behind a community schools approach. The designated fiscal agent must demonstrate capacity to be accountable for financial and program administration. States should:

- Allow partners in a local community schools strategy to determine which organization demonstrates the expertise to serve as lead agency for the community schools approach or for a particular program.

New Jersey: Communities operating School-Based Youth Services Programs can designate the agency they want to manage the program. Managing agencies for the 45 programs include local governments, hospitals, clinics, universities, social services agencies, and school districts.

New ESEA Provision: *Under the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, grants may be awarded to educational agencies, community-based organizations, other public or private entities, and consortia of two or more agencies, organizations, or entities. To compete effectively for these grants, local partners must decide which organizations are best equipped to manage the program, deliver quality services, and achieve desired results.*

Investments

Make targeted INVESTMENTS in community schools to increase the effectiveness of existing programs and resources.

10. Support Community School Coordinator positions.

Community schools require effective, focused management that does not divert school staff from the core academic mission of the school. To ensure quality, states should:

- Make clear to local school districts that Title I funds can be used for this purpose.
- Provide financial support for an individual to coordinate each community school, or provide partial funding and expect that schools and communities share the cost.

Kentucky: The Family Resource and Youth Services Centers are required to have full-time coordinators. State funding is provided to pay the salary of this individual.

New ESEA Provision: Title I provisions on the coordination and integration of services referenced on page 21 clearly allow funds to be used to support hiring a coordinator at the school site.

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11. Provide sustained funding.

Sustained funding enables communities to implement a community schools approach for a period sufficient to demonstrate its effectiveness. States should:

- Make funding available for a minimum of five years for programs that demonstrate accountability for results.

The New Jersey School-Based Youth Program, the Kentucky Family Support and Youth Services Program, and the California After School and Neighborhood Partnerships Program all provide continuing funding for local groups that can demonstrate effectiveness.

***New ESEA Provision:** Under the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Act, states have flexibility to provide grants to local programs for up to five years, two years more than was allowable under previous federal law. Five years is a more realistic period of time within which to expect local stakeholders to develop strategies to sustain services and opportunities.*

12. Support planning at the school–community level.

A planning process for community schools enables partners to examine needs and resources, review relevant data, and develop a clear community schools approach for improving learning. States should:

- Provide planning grants to enable communities to initiate a community schools approach. States can require communities to provide matching funds.

***California:** The Healthy Start program provides Collaborative Planning Grants of $50,000 over a one-to-two year period "to assist the school–community partnership in moving toward the implementation of a system of comprehensive, integrated supports to children, youth, and families." Local collaboratives must provide a 25 percent match in cash, services, or resources.*

13. Build schools as centers of communities.

Many states are now spending substantial funds on the construction and rehabilitation of schools. These facilities should be designed and built as centers of community, accommodating a community's needs for space and services. A fully developed community school is open evenings and weekends and provides space for services in the school building during the school day. These extended uses provide the public with an increased return on its large investment in school facilities, while giving schools the physical capacity to function as centers of community.

In many states, standards for school buildings allow limited space for non-classroom uses. Moreover, too often schools are built at a distance from population centers so that they are isolated from community life. States should:

- Review and revise school construction and financing standards to ensure that school buildings can be built, equipped, and renovated to incorporate the services and opportunities of a community school, and ensure security for students, staff, and community residents. Encourage integration of school construction funding with state and local funds for libraries, recreation centers, health centers, and other public facilities.
- Develop guidelines for rural, suburban, and urban areas alike to limit the size of schools and locate them so they are accessible for students, families, and members of the community and serve as centers of community.

***Wisconsin:** The state has made available funding for Milwaukee Public Schools to build new school facilities instead of transporting students to schools outside their neighborhoods. In one low-income neighborhood, the district worked with the Boys and Girls Club to design and build a new modern multi-use facility. The school makes use of special purpose rooms, including the gym, art room, music room, and library, during the school day, while the Boys and Girls Club uses these spaces for programming after school, evenings, and Saturdays.*

***Maine:** The SEA encourages school superintendents to contact the State Planning Office (SPO) before making decisions about where to build new schools. Such contacts enable SPO staff to arrange meetings with local school planners for the purpose of coordinating school facility planning and local community planning. The SPO and State Board of Education have published a brochure, The ABC's of School Site Selection, to help local officials avoid sprawl and analyze school sites for their accessibility to village centers and established neighborhoods, among other criteria.*

(Source: National Trust for Historic Preservation)

***New Jersey:** The Economic Development Authority (EDA), a state-funded independent agency, has lead responsibility for an estimated $12 billion in new school construction statewide over the next 10 years. The EDA is actively promoting the concept of schools as community centers, and works to develop multi-agency funding for facilities that combine education with community services and supports.*

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14. Provide intensive technical assistance to foster the involvement of families in their children's education.

In addition to schools, a variety of organizations have the capacity to strengthen parent and family involvement in the education of their children. Community-based organizations, family support agencies, faith-based institutions, and youth development groups all have important roles to play in reaching families who may feel that the school system does not understand their situations or welcome their involvement. States should:

- Encourage school districts to use Title I parent involvement funds to build partnerships with other organizations, rather than seeing family involvement as solely the responsibility of the school.
- Review the effectiveness of existing family involvement strategies supported by federal and state funds to see that they are working effectively within the community schools vision.

Texas: The Alliance Schools initiative engages parents as change agents in transforming urban schools and neighborhoods. The Texas Interfaith Alliance, a community-organizing group, seeks to empower other stakeholders—teachers, community leaders, administrators, and public officials. In 1993, at the behest of the Alliance, the Texas Legislature created the Investment Capital Fund (ICF), a grant program for schools that were committed to reform through local control and accountability. This program had grown from $2 million to $14 million by 1999. At Zavala Elementary School in Austin, parents, teachers, and organizers determined that inadequate health care contributed to low levels of student achievement. Through ICF funding they brought health services to the school with a full-time nurse, free immunizations, and preventative health counseling. This helped lead Zavala from ranking 33rd in attendance to having the highest attendance rate in the school district at 97.8 percent in 1994–1995. The following year, students met or exceeded all but one of the standards on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills Test (Interfaith Education Fund, 2001).

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15. Provide a source of flexible funding to achieve priority results.

A source of additional flexible funding provides an incentive for community agencies and organizations to bring existing resources into a community school and gives partners in a community school the opportunity to identify evidence-based strategies that can help achieve priority results. States should:

- Provide some flexible funding to help bring partners into the community schools with their existing programs and to fill gaps between existing programs.

Missouri: The state has established policy directions to achieve six core results for children and families. Through the Caring Communities Program, the state is working to provide more flexible funding to communities in exchange for accountability for results. At the community level, public and private funds support the community schools approach.

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16. Strengthen professional development.

Quality professional development experiences help staff build a cohesive community schools approach, provide high quality services and supports, and build cultural competency. States should:

- Ensure that professional development opportunities are available to all staff working in a community school setting, whether they are employees of schools, organizations in the community, or community residents.
- Include professional development to develop skills in working with community schools as part of required competencies for school principals and district leaders.

New ESEA Provision: The 21st Century Learning Centers program allows states to use up to three percent of their funding to provide technical assistance (TA) and evaluation to local grantees. States should consider how these funds might be integrated with other TA funding streams to support a comprehensive community schools capacity building effort.

Concluding Note

The idea of family, school, and community working together to help children and youth learn and succeed is not new. Rather, it reflects the central roles that each of these institutions plays in our democratic society. As the world has become more complex and institutions have become more isolated from one another, it is more important than ever to strategically bring together the assets of family, school, and community. This is the work of a community school. Through community schools, educators will no longer be isolated. Families and communities will share responsibility for the most vital work of a vibrant democracy—the full education of all our children.

"Together, through a community schools approach, all of our children will become educated people, productive workers, strong family members, and active participants in American democracy."

The Rural School and Community Trust

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Executive Summary

A Handbook for State Policy Leaders

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Improving Student Learning/Strengthening Schools, Families, and Communities

Coalition for Community Schools

As states strive to meet increased expectations for student achievement, there is a growing understanding that learning takes place in many places—after school, at home, and in neighborhoods and communities as well as during the school day. Research also recognizes that children need support from their families and their communities to reach their full potential. The Coalition for Community Schools believes that children will learn best in a school that:

"We [educators] tend to put considerations of family and community off limits in education reform policy discussions. However, we do so at our peril."

Paul E. Barton
Senior Associate
Educational Testing Service

- Meets their basic needs, including their safety
- Offers high quality curriculum and teaching aligned with academic standards, during the school day
- Provides learning experiences that extend learning beyond the formal school day
- Shows them opportunities for success beyond academics
- Engages them as active learners and contributors in their communities.

Our public schools should not assume sole, or even primary, responsibility for creating this environment for learning. Schools can, however, form *intentional partnerships* with families and with a wide range of different community organizations and institutions for this purpose. Together, they can create community schools.

Community Schools are Making a Difference

Research shows that community schools are making a considerable difference in cities and towns in almost every state. Here are some of the ways that community schools are strengthening students, families, schools and communities.

- **Strengthening Students.** Community schools improve student learning; engage students in real world learning; and involve students as resources to serve their communities as they learn.
- **Strengthening Families.** Community schools involve families in their children's education, and help families address issues that are barriers to learning.

- **Strengthening Schools.** Community schools marshal community assets to improve students' learning; help teachers focus on teaching; and allow principals to keep schools moving toward high standards for all.
- **Strengthening Communities.** Community schools help make public programs more effective and efficient and leverage private resources. They are accountable to community members. Community schools bring communities together.
- **Community Schools have Public Support.** According to the Ohio's Education Matters Poll, 84 percent of Ohioans support community use of schools for activities such as recreation programs and parenting and adult education classes; 79 percent agree that schools should offer mental health services for students; and 65 percent agree that social services for children—like health services, dental services and after-school programs—should be located in local schools (KnowledgeWorks Foundation).
- **And Community Schools make good sense!**

> ***"The notion that students... should be held to high standards is simple and compelling. But...every aspect of a needy student's life needs reinforcement in order for him or her to concentrate on the work of the classroom."***
>
> *Gene Maeroff,*
> Altered Destinies

What State Policy Leaders Can Do

The Coalition for Community Schools calls on state policy leaders to take action to support community schools. States can provide necessary leadership in three areas:

- **Develop and promote a VISION for improving student learning that incorporates the critical role of families and communities, as well as schools.**
  1. ***Articulate and promote the vision of community schools.*** The vision should focus on supporting young people's learning and development, while strengthening families and communities.
  2. ***Create a framework of results.*** This framework can focus local action and increase accountability.
- **Ensure that all state programs and policies FOCUS on supporting student learning.**
  3. ***Coordinate categorical grant programs across agencies to improve student learning.*** To reduce fragmentation, states can create strategies for planning and evaluation across categorical programs.

ESSENTIAL OPERATIONAL ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

1. **Clear vision and goals** as well as ways to measure effectiveness
2. A **full-time community school coordinator** to provide leadership for planning, management, and collaboration
3. A source of **flexible funding** to attract new partners and allow the partnership to respond to urgent priorities
4. **Sufficient programs, services, and resources** at the school site to achieve desired results
5. **Effective, research-based, service-delivery strategies** coordinated at the community school
6. **Integration of after-school programs and community-based learning experiences** with the school curriculum
7. **Engaged community leadership** at the school site and at the community or school-district level
8. **Technical assistance and professional development** to support quality services
9. **Adequate and accessible facilities.**

This document is available online at *www.communityschools.org*.

Coalition for Community Schools

Strengthening schools, families & communities

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9. ***Allow each locality to select its lead agency for different state programs.*** When communities are able to select an organization to serve as lead agency for a particular initiative, collaboration is more likely to occur than when the state decides who should be in charge.

Together, through a community school approach, all of our children will become educated people, productive workers, strong family members, and active participants in American democracy.

The Rural School and Community Trust

- **Make targeted INVESTMENTS in community schools to increase the effectiveness of existing programs and resources.**

10. ***Support community school coordinator positions.*** Community school coordinators engage community resources to improve student achievement and ensure that school staff can remain focused on learning.

11. ***Provide sustained funding.*** Community schools need support for a period of time sufficient to demonstrate their effectiveness.

12. ***Support planning at the school–community level.*** Planning grants for local community school initiatives can engage potential partners and ensure quality programs.

13. ***Build schools as centers of communities.*** When communities invest sizable public resources in school buildings, these facilities should be designed and built to accommodate the community's needs for space and services.

14. ***Provide intensive technical assistance on ways to foster the involvement of families in their children's education.*** Family involvement improves students' school achievement, and agencies and organizations in the community can play a vital role in reaching and engaging parents.

15. ***Provide a source of flexible funding to achieve priority results.*** Flexible funding helps bring community partners to the table to determine what needs to be done to support student learning.

16. ***Strengthen professional development.*** All those involved in community schools need access to professional development. Skills for working in collaboration with community organizations should be included in professional development for principals.

Cover photo: Second grade class field trip to the Colorado state capitol (PhotoDisc).

SNAPSHOT OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Community schools are public schools that are open to students, families, and community members before, during, and after school throughout the year. They have high standards and expectations for students, qualified teachers, and rigorous curriculum. The staff knows that students and their families need more to succeed, so community schools do more.

Before- and after-school programs build on classroom experiences and help students expand their horizons, contribute to their communities, and have fun. Family support centers help with parent involvement, child rearing, employment, housing, and other services. Medical, dental, and mental health services are readily available. Parents and community residents participate in adult education and job training programs, and use the school as a place for community problem solving.

Community schools use the community as a resource to engage students in learning and service, and to help them become problem-solvers in their communities. Volunteers come to community schools to support young people's academic, interpersonal, and career success.

Individual schools and the school system work in partnership with community agencies to operate these unique institutions. Families, students, principals, teachers, and neighborhood residents decide together how to support student learning.

4. ***Provide incentives for coordination at the local level.*** Local school improvement plans and plans for programs and services to be provided at schools can include provisions for coordination and integration.

5. ***Connect existing task forces and advisory groups.*** The goal is to reduce fragmentation among agencies and programs.

6. ***Rethink State Education Agency (SEA) and related organizational arrangements to promote coordination.*** Place similar programs in the same unit, with a mandate to align their activities to support student learning.

7. ***Coordinate technical assistance resources.*** Expand available technical assistance resources by developing public/private partnerships and coordinating TA from a range of state programs.

8. ***Recognize the value of community collaboration and community decision-making.*** Allow existing community collaborative groups to coordinate a community schools initiative if they can demonstrate sufficient capacity.

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Coalition for Community Schools Partner Organizations

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Center for Community Change
- Development Training Institute
- National Child Labor Committee
- National Community Building Network
- National Congress for Community Economic Development
- National Council of La Raza
- National Urban League
- Police Executive Research Forum

EDUCATION

- American Association of School Administrators
- American Federation of Teachers
- Center for Community Partnerships, University of Pennsylvania
- Collaborative for Integrated School Services, Harvard University Graduate School of Education
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- Education Alliance, NY
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Association of State Boards of Education
- National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education
- National Community Education Association
- National Education Association
- National School Boards Association
- New Vision for Public Schools, NY
- Pacific Oaks College, CA
- Public Education Network
- The Rural School and Community Trust
- Council of the Great City Schools*
- Learning First Alliance*

FAMILY SUPPORT

- Alliance for Children and Families
- Bush Center for Child Development and Social Policy
- Center for Mental Health in Schools
- Child Welfare League of America
- Children's Aid Society, NY
- Family Resource Coalition of America
- National Assembly of School-Based Health Care
- National Association of School Psychologists
- United Way of America
- American Public Human Services Association*

GOVERNMENT

Local and State Government

- National League of Cities
- National Association of Counties*
- National Conference of State Legislatures*
- National Governors' Association

Federal Government

- Corporation for National Service
- Learn and Serve America
- U.S. Department of Education
  - National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policy-Making and Management
  - National School-to-Work Office
  - Office of Educational Research and Improvement
  - Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
  - 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program
  - Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
  - Administration for Children and Families
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Office of Adolescent Health
  - Office of Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
  - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
  - Office of University Partnerships
- U.S. Department of Justice
  - Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

LOCAL COMMUNITY SCHOOLS NETWORKS

- Achievement Plus Community Learning Centers, St. Paul, MN
- After-School Corporation, NY
- Alliance for Families & Children, Hennepin County, MN
- Apple Tree Institute, Washington, DC
- Birmingham Public Schools, AL
- Bridges to the Future, Flint, MI
- Bridges to Success, Indianapolis, IN
- Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority, GA
- Community Agencies Corporation of New Jersey
- Community-School Connections, NY
- Community Schools Rhode Island
- Doors to the Future, Philadelphia, PA
- Jacksonville Partnership for Children, FL
- KidsCAN!, Mesa, AZ
- Local Investment Commission, Kansas City, MO
- Minneapolis Beacons Project, MN
- New Paradigm Partners, Turtle Lake, WI
- Positive Youth Development Initiative, Jacksonville, FL
- Rockland 21st Century Collaborative for Children and Youth, NY
- School Linked Services, Inc., Kansas City, KS
- St. Louis Park Schools, MN
- St. Louis Public Schools, Office of Community Education, MO
- Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN), Portland, OR
- United Way of Greater High Point, NC
- United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania

NATIONAL COMMUNITY SCHOOLS NETWORKS

- Communities in Schools
- Education Development Center
- Institute for Responsive Education
- National Center for Community Education
- National Center for Schools and Communities
- Schools of the 21st Century

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

- Children's Defense Fund
- Institute for Social and Education Policy, NY
- Joy Dryfoos, Independent Researcher
- The Finance Project

PHILANTHROPY

- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
- Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth
- Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds
- Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
- Polk Bros. Foundation
- Carnegie Corporation

STATE ENTITIES

- California Healthy Start Field Office, California Center for Community-School Partnerships
- Child and Family Policy Center, IA
- Children & Families Foundation, NE
- Colorado Foundation for Families & Children
- Foundation Consortium, CA
- Illinois Community School Partnership
- New Jersey School-Based Youth Services/ Department of Human Services
- Office of Family Resource and Youth Services Center, KY
- State Education and Environment Roundtable
- Washington State Readiness-to-Learn Initiative

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- Academy for Educational Development
- America's Promise
- American Youth Policy Forum
- Association of New York State Youth Bureaus
- Boys and Girls Clubs of America
- Camp Fire USA
- Center for Youth Development and Policy Research
- Citizens Scholarship Fund of America
- Developmental Studies Center
- Forum on Youth Investment
- Foundations, Inc.
- Fund for the City of New York
- National Collaboration for Youth
- National Institute for Out-of-School Time
- National School-Age Care Alliance
- National Youth Employment Coalition
- YMCA of the USA

*Interested Parties

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